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A Note on Multani Language

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Multan as a cradle of human life is steeped in antiquity. It is so old as to have seen history grow and flourish in its lap. Al-Beiruni who lived here about 1000 A. D. writes in his famous *Indica* that Hindus of his day considered Multan to have been in existence for over two hundred thousand years. That may be a legend but so much is certain that when Aryans came down from Pamirs, they found it a flourishing town and that is why they called it : Mool-Asthan or Mool-Taran *i.e.* Basic City—'mool' in Sanskrit meaning 'basic'. The period of Aryan dominance according to *Rig Veda* is over four thousand years back.

Whatever language was spoken by the aboriginal dwellers of this area it came to be overshadowed by Sanskrit which Aryans spoke. That was the first admixture of tongues and although Sanskrit gained ascendance as any conquering language would, yet the basic words and expressions were not lost.

The richness of Indus Valley of which Multan was the crowning capital attracted invaders. We find it coveted first and conquerred by Osiris, King of Egypt. He is the same Osiris who is said to have introduced Indians to agriculture and civilization and to have been so revered for his goodness as to be worshipped in the derivative *Ishwar*.

Then followed a galaxy of conquerors of different climes and different tongues. The beautiful Semiramis, Queen of Babylon and Assyria, the Medes, the white Huns from across the Hindukush

(of whom the Getes or Jats remained), the Scythians, the Persians under Feridun and Cyrus, the Greeks under Alexander, the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, the Persians again, the Afghans and finally the English.

With every invasion there was a miscegenation of races and a mixture of speech and expression and currents, and social and religious movements which influenced the common spoken language.

Multan has all through the ages retained its hegemony as a cultural centre of Indus valley and Multani has therefore been the most important of local languages. Even today it is known as 'Seraiki' in Sindhi, 'Seraiki' meaning the language of 'Sardars'. It is an irony of fate that political re-groupings have brought into prominence regional languages like Panjabi, Sindhi and Balochi, and the parent language has been relegated to a comparatively secondary position.

The importance of Multani could be judged from the fact that it is the most widely spoken language in West Pakistan ; serving an area of about 75,000 squares miles comprising the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Montgomery, Muzaffargarh, Multan, the former States of Bahawalpur and Khairpur and Balochistan and is spoken by about half a crore (5 million) inhabitants of West Pakistan.

The main strands that have woven themselves into the fabric of modern Multani are besides the old native dialect, the Aryan Sanskrit, the Buddhist Prakrit, the Zorastrian Pahlvi, the Muslim Arabic, Muslim Persian and the Christian English.

The process had started with the language of *Rig Veda* with the softening of dentals. There was, for example, the change of *d* into *l* as in *Sola* (16) in place of *Sodasa* or *Na'l* for *Nada*. This change had continued during the middle Indian period of Prakrit and was mainly concerned with the splitting of dentals into dentals and cereberals, and further the change of dentals into cereberals—a

phenomenon which was noticeable later too, *e.g.*, *das* (to bite) changing into *das*—with a soft *d*. However, just as original Multani was overlaid by Sanskrit, the latter-day Multani was overwhelmed by Arabic and Persian. The borrowings from all dominant languages have been so extensive that it is difficult to assign the limit of each influence.

Nevertheless Samskrit influence is distinctly traceable, *e.g.*,

Sanskrit		*Multani*		*Meaning*
پلان	(Palan)	پلان	(Palan)	Saddle
سند	(Mand)	سندہ	(Manda)	Slow
نناند	(Ninand)	نناں	(Ninan)	Husband's sister
بانہہ	(Banh)	بانہہ	(Banh)	Arm
لون	(Loon)	لون	(Loon)	Salt
سینہہ	(Sinh)	شینہہ	(Shinh)	Lion

As for other languages one has to go a little deep to notice the similarity *e. g.* Assyrian *Sangu* meaning 'respected', is to be found with a slight change in the meaning in *sangi*—friend.

Prakrits borrowings may be evidenced by *Masana* (cremation-ground) changing into *Smasana* or *Shamshan* and *Neha* (love) changing into *Sneha* (Love-message) ; and strikingly enough Prakrit *Lathi* remaining *Lathi* to this day, Lesser Pahlvi *Nahar* may be recognized in Multani *Niranh* (breakfast).

The other big influence as extensive as of Sanskrit on Multani is of Arabic and Persian. Taking Arabic, for example, the words of every-day use :

Arabic *Multani*

كره (Kurrah) (round) has become كروه (Karwah) (Ewer).

كتف (Kitf) (shoulder—joint) has been particularized for mutton-joint as كتيف (Katif).

Arabic *Multani*

بصل (Basl) (onion) is spoken as وصل (Wasal) in the same meaning.

فوم (Foom) (Garlic) is used as تھوم (Thoom) in the same meaning.

فجر (Fajr) (Morning) is still (Fajir) فجر (morning).

قمیض (Qamiz) (Shirt) though advanced in fashion remains the same in meaning.

مقراض (Miqraz) (Scissors) is used as مقراض (Miqraz) in the same meaning.

Coming to Persian, and again picking from common parlance, we find آفتابہ (Long-necked ewer) of Persian, becoming استاوا (Astawa).

ڈول (An earthen vessel) becoming ڈول (Dol) in Multani.

بالائی (Cream) becoming ملائی (Malai) in Multani.

ھاون دستہ (Pestle and Mortar) becoming حمام دستہ (Hamam Dasta) in Multani.

زال (woman) becoming most-intimate زال (wife) in Multani.

English, of course, has given the ancient Multani, the modern بلیک - بسکٹ - سکول - پتلون - کوٹ - ریل and so on.

Despite these borrowings, however, there can still be found a substratum of ancient Multani, not only in words but also in its peculiar form of speech, as for example, in this verse of Baba Farid Shakar-Ganj utt-red about 800 years back :

فریدا کالے میڈے کپڑے کالا میڈا ویس
گنہیں بھریا میں پھراں لوک آکھن درویش

(O Farid! Black are my clothes and black my apparel—way of life, Full of sins I move about and still people call me a holy man). پھراں - آکھن - میڈا are old Multani.

It would be wrong to suppose that Urdu took its birth from Panjabi as Hafiz Mahmud Khan Sherani in his book پنجاب میں اردو (Punjab men Urdu) has tried to prove. It is in fact Multani which has given rise to Urdu and Panjabi. Interestingly enough almost all the instances or arguments advanced by Hafiz Sherani are derived from Multani which proves that Multani is the fountain-head and Urdu and other regional languages are its streams.

Till such time as the conquest of Multan by Muslims under Muhammad Bin Qasim in 95 A. H. (714 A. D.), Multani was Sanskritized Hindi. The specimen of ancient Multani poetry is to be found in the versified exploits of Mohyal Brahmins who are one of the seven branches of Dutts—also known as Hussaini Brahmins by reason of having aided Imam Hussain in his battles. Dutts are one of the oldest branches of Brahmins, their progenitor having been the preceptor of Kurwas and Pandwas. It can, therefore, be safely presumed that their family-hymns were the repository of Basic Multani. Here is a piece :

مدھ جھو چھا کی انش میں دت نام سلطان
سدھ و یوگ جو بیرجی عرب کیو استھان
رائے پن پن اتمی کرن دیس جو دھیان
دھارو میرو جو دت ھن عرب کیو استھان
جئے دت جو بیر سار دو ٹوک مچائی
سب شترو کو مار بیچ رن پھرے دھائی

(Dutt who is born of Sidh Yog in an auspicious moment took up abode in Arabia. God-fearing guardian of their country Dharu and Miru who are Dutts also went to live in Arabia. So great prowess was shown by Dutt in war that the battle-field rang with the cry that all enemies were killed).

Here nouns are mostly Sanskrit but the verbs are ancient Multani.

With the advent of Arabs as conquerors, Arabic began to be studied so much so that Abdullah bin Haroon Multani wrote

verses in Arabic, and according to Ibn-i-Aankal (343 A. H. or 953 A. D.) Arabic was common in Multan of his time.

Towards the end of the 4th century of Hijri era Daylamites and Khurasanis gained ascendancy and Persian became popular and Bishari Mugadassi found it current when he visted Multan in 375 A. D.

Arabic and Persian words naturally found their way into indigenous Multani as already indicated.

The Chaucer of present day Multani is Hazrat Baba Farid Ganj-Shakar who was born in a village near Multan and died at Pakpattan about 584 A. H. His verses, preserved in Sikh Granth Sahib are the best specimen of Arabic-Persian-Hindi mixture.

فریدا کالے میڈے کپڑے کالا میڈا ویس
گنہیں بھریا میں پھراں لوک آکھن درویش
فریدا روٹی میڈی کاٹھدی لون میڈا پکھ
جنہاں کھادی چوپڑی ڈاڈھے کھاسن دکھ

(Farid, black are my clothes black my ways—apparel. Full of sins I move about and people call me *dervesh*. O Farid, my bread is of wood and my salt the earth—پکھ . Those who eat buttered bread they will see troubles.)

نفس مبادا کہ بگوید ترا — خیز چہ خسپی کہ اجن رات ہے
چوتنہاروی زیر ایہو زمین — نیک عمل کن کہ ایہا ڈات ہے
پنہ شکر گنج بدل جاں شنو — ضائع مکن عمر کہ ہیہات ہے

(The ego might say to you it is still night—hearken not—rise, why sleep. As you have to go alone under this earth—do good deeds because this is charity. Listen to the advice of Ganj Shakar and do not waste life, alas!)

Not long after the above, Amir Khusrau's sojourn in Multan gave impetus to the mixture of Arabic and Persian with Hindi (which was another name for Multani). Describing his capture

at the hands of Mongols after the battle in which Prince Muhammad son of Balban was killed, he says :

من کہ بر سر نمی نہادم گل — بار بر سر نہاد و گفتا جل

جل (Jul) with soft J means in Multani 'to move'.

Multan and Dipalpur were then the bulwarks of Muslim India against devastating Mongols and armies and their commanders came and went from here. For example, Ghiasuddin took a whole army recruited from Multan and surrounding country to Delhi. Even earlier, Multanis had in large numbers migrated to Delhi and flourished greatly in trade. About 816 A. H. Khizr Khan, Governor of Multan, under instructions from Taimur invaded Delhi with an army composed of inhabitants of Multan and environs.

From these extensive migrations in dominant position there could well be judged the extent to which Multani must have influenced both as a parent and as an associate of the spoken language of Delhi which was termed either as Rekhta or Urdu.

That Multani is a parent language of Urdu is further supported by the fact that Urdu in its rules of grammar is very near to Multani. For instance:

1. In Multani, nouns are joined by connecting words دا ـدے ـ دیاں which change into کا ـ کے ـ کی of Urdu, for example, ملتان دا حلوہ into ملتان کا حلوہ .

2. In Multani, the adjective comes before noun in an adjectival clause and the same is the case with Urdu, *e. g.* Multani سوھنا بال and Urdu خوبصورت لڑکا .

3. Plurals are formed by a common method, the grammatical genders are governed by the same rules and tenses follow the same formation.

4. Two-thirds of Urdu vocabulary shows Multani lineage. Hafiz Mahmud Khan Sherani has given a long list of words which were used in India in the 7th or 8th century of the Hijri era and which were peculiar to Multani and are used in it to this day.

5. The most important phenomenon is the dropping of intervocalic vowel A. In Multani this had happened ages back *e.g.* آنکھ had become اکھ ـ لکھ : لاکھ ـ نک : ناک ـ ہتھ : ہاتھ and so on. Both northern and southern Indians were about the time after Multani migrations using the same words with inter-vocalic vowel dropped. پا ٹ (Bhasha for head-gear) was پگ . Amir Khusrau says (725 A. H.) :

اے دھلی والے بتان سادہ پگ بستہ اور چیرہ کج نہادہ

کھاٹ was کھٹ as Fakhar-ud-Din Mubarak in his فرہنگ (*Farhang*) written in 8th century says: تختہ ہندواں باشد میاں بافتہ = کت *i.e. Kat* is Hindu bedding woven in between, کھنڈ - بھنڈ ـ انب are other instances.

6. Another noticeable feature is that nominative verb with combined nasal *ym-ayn* - ین was used in Urdu which was a characteristic of Multani : اوکوں اکھین (tell him) ایہہ کریں (Do this) and so on, are Multani. We have about the same in Urdu:

وحشت و شیفتہ اب مرثیہ کہوں شاید
مر گیا غالب آشفتہ نوا کہتے ہیں

7. Again the formation of continuing tense by addition of سی (si) is a feature of Multani which had also been adopted by Urdu, *e. g.* رسالہ معراج العاشقین (*Risala Merajul Aashqin*) written by Syed Muhammad Hussain Gesu Daraz in 825 A. H. in oldest Urdu wherein occurs:

ممکن کی انک سوں غیر نہ دیکھنا سو
غفلت کے کان سوں غیر نہ سننا سو

i. e. دیکھتے رہنا - سنتے رہنا . Compare this with Multani :

دم حیدر حیدر کرسوں انہاں موذیاں کولوں نہ ڈرسوں

(We shall call upon Ali and shall not be frightened by these evil-doers).

8. Still more, the composite words of Urdu in which the latter part is supposed to be meaningless (تابع مہمل) is fraught

with meaning in Multani and is still used *e. g.*
in چپ چپانا - دن دھاڑے ـ تانگنا ، مانگنا ، چپاتا ، دھاڑے ، تانگنا
are meaningless in Urdu but mean in Multani : silent, day, awaiting.

It would burden the paper to multiply instances but it would be abundantly apparent to every one that Urdu has really to look to Multani as its parent language. It would be useful in this context to remember that upto the 7th century A. H., Lahore was part of the principality of Multan. Syed Ali Hujwairi (Data Ganj Bakhsh) Lahori says:

من اندر دیار ہند در بلدہ لاہور کہ از مضافات ملتان است درمیان ناجنساں گرفتار شدم

Panjabi is as much an off-spring of Multani as Urdu or for that matter Sindhi and Balochi. Abul Fazal, for example, calls the language of the people of Panjab as Multani.

The earliest work written in Modern Multani is a versified book on the rules of bathing, shrouding and burying the dead, entitled مسائل غسل کفن و دفن (*Masail-i-Ghusal-o-Kafan-o-Dafan*) by Nur Muhammad of Shergarh written in 1137 A. D. In 1218 A.D. was produced the more famous book of Hazrat Mian Abdul Hakim یوسف زلیخا (*Yusuf Zuleikha*). Multani literature multiplied but lacked recognition and later was comptetely over-shadowed by the conquering languages.

However, the frequent mixing of the different languages had a unique effect on Multani. If made it more expressive and infinitely sweet. The whole range of sounds from very hard to ultra-soft have found representation and their grouping has given rise to more letters, more words spreading over more expressive fields. As a result Multani has seven extra alphabetic letters peculiar to itself. It has forty-two letters in all. The extra letters are (the notation is empirical) :

(1) ب (B with two dots)—a soft *b* produced by the labial

junction on the inner edge of the lips as in باوی (twenty-two).

(2) ج (J with two vertical dots)—a soft *J* prnduced by the tongue brushing the root of teeth as in: جانے تتی کوں کیندی پیاسے

(3) ج (with two horizontal dots)—Sound composite of J and N, as in ونج

(4) ڈ (D with a dot underneath)—Sound between ض and ڈ like Arabic ض as in ڈو (two).

(5) گ (G with upper of two bars looped)—Soft guttural sound as in گال (abuse).

(6) گ (G with lower of two bars looped)—Composite sound of soft G and N as in گاں (cow).

(7) ڻ (N with mark)—Composite sound of N and hard R as in سمڻ (to sleep).

The last sound *i. e.* ڻ is important as an ending of all verbs. The expressiveness of Multani is further increased by additional expressive forms of speech; for instance, there is a verb تھیوڻ in addition to ہووڻ . تیہوڻ signifies a completed act in immediate past while ہووڻ denotes things 'becoming' or 'being done' or 'having been done'. This distinction is covered in Urdu by auxiliary verbs or adverbial clauses.

The problems of this language arise out of neglect. There has been no attempt to collect, print and publish the various works that lie scattered about. There has been no attempt to compile its authoritative dictionary. Mr. O'Brien and Sir James Wilson compiled respectively a *Glossary of Multani Language*

and a *Dictionary of Multani* but they are sketchy attempts and while they deserve our gratitude their books need to be supplemented.

The other necessity is the compilation of its grammar. Sa'dullah Khan Mallezai of Multan is reported to have written one but it appears to be lost. Akhtar Waheed who died young made an attempt in this direction which was published but that too is preliminary.

The third problem is that of Script. Emerging from its Sanskrit period Multani came to be written in 'Nasakh' but since that was affiliated to Arabic, the Hindus began to write it in 'Landa' characters. About the end of 18th century of the Christian era 'Nastaliq' came to be adopted but it was not till 1898, when the Christian Mission published a translation of the Bible in Multani, that 'Nastaliq' asserted itself as the Multani script. The notation requires to be standardized and a type to be developed.